

STUDY TITLE: Migration and Oil Industry Employment of North Slope Alaska Natives.

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BACKGROUND: Over the past 20 years, petroleum production--primarily at Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope--has become a major part of Alaska's economy. There is also potential for future petroleum development on the outer continental shelf (OCS) of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas along Alaska's northern coast. How past petroleum development has affected, and how potential future development could affect Alaska's Native people are important issues. The North Slope is home to about 4,300 Alaska Natives in eight scattered villages. Various past studies have examined social and economic effects of petroleum development on Alaska's North Slope Natives. How the availability of jobs in the petroleum industry affects migration among North Slope Natives has not been previously examined.

OBJECTIVES: The objectives of this study are (1) to find out why people migrate to and within the North Slope; and (2) to find out if working for the oil industry at Prudhoe Bay or Kuparuk makes North Slope Natives more likely to migrate.

DESCRIPTION: The study is based on interviews of Alaska North

Slope Native migrants, of non-Native migrants, and of North Slope Natives who are oil industry employees. Researchers interviewed 52 North Slope householders and 34 Native employees of the oil industry. The 52 interviewed households (39 Native and 13 non-Native) represent about 10 percent of all migrant households and 3 percent of the total 1,700 North Slope households. The 34 Native employees interviewed represent about half of all North Slope Natives with jobs at the Prudhoe Bay complex. The interviewers asked households why and when they moved to their current communities; whether their new communities had met their expectations; and whether and why they planned future moves. Native oil industry employees were asked how long they had held their job, whether they had previously held other jobs in the oil industry, and whether and why they had moved from one community to before or after obtaining their jobs.

SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS: The study found that employment was the single most important reason both Natives and non-Natives cited for moving. One-third of the Natives interviewed moved from their communities soon after they got oil industry jobs, although a direct link between the oil industry employment and migration is not clear. These conclusions are tentative, due to the uncertain economic future of the North Slope as the Prudhoe Bay field is depleted, and the limited information collected for this study.

STUDY RESULTS: The offer of, the prospect of, or the desire for jobs was the single most important reason both Natives and non-Natives cited for moving. However, a significant portion of Natives also cited reasons for moving that were not related to jobs. One-third of the Natives interviewed did move from their communities after they got oil industry jobs. However, it appears that many such moves off the North Slope may not be permanent, and it is clear that turnover among Native employees of oil companies is high. The likely future pattern of household migration within and to the North Slope, and the likely future pattern of migration of North Slope natives who work for the oil industry may only be inferred tentatively from these results. First, the economic future of the North Slope is uncertain as the Prudhoe Bay field is depleted. Second, the information collected for this study is by itself not sufficient to project future migration, and there is little information on past migration trends. Also, the importance of subsistence in explaining migration needs more study. Finally, interviewing a larger number of migrant households would produce more definitive findings.

STUDY PRODUCTS: Marshall, David. 1993. Migration and Oil Industry Employment of North Slope Alaska Natives. Prepared by the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage. for the U.S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service Alaska OCS Region, Anchorage, Alaska. Technical Report No. 158. MMS Report No. 92-0061. Contract No: 14-12-0001-30311.

An electronic data base of study data is maintained by the Minerals Management Service Alaska OCS Region, Anchorage, Alaska.

